

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 1-130, without prejudice.

Please add the following new claims:

131. (new) A spinal plating system comprising;
an elongated plate having a plurality of bone screw apertures;
a locking ring disposed in one of the bone screw apertures, the locking ring having at least a portion resiliently expandable from a retracted state to an expanded state;
a bone screw inserted into the one of the bone screw apertures, the bone screw having a head with a diameter sized such that in the retracted state the locking ring prevents the bone screw from backing out of the plate and in the expanded state the locking ring permits insertion and removal of the bone screw relative to the one bone screw aperture; and
a tool for removing the bone screw from the one bone screw aperture, the tool having a first portion coupled to the head of the bone screw and a second portion resiliently expanding the locking ring to the expanded state.
132. (New) The spinal plating system of claim 131, wherein the first portion is threadably engaged with the head of the bone screw.
133. (New) The spinal plating system of claim 131, wherein the first portion comprises a hex section that complements a hex tool opening in the bone screw.
134. (New) The spinal plating system of claim 131, wherein the locking ring comprises a plurality of paddles.
135. (New) The spinal plating system of claim 131, wherein the head of the bone screw comprises a ledge.

136. (New) The spinal plating system of claim 131, wherein the first portion is independently rotatable relative to the second portion.

137. (New) A method of surgically repairing bone with an elongated plate having a plurality of bone screw apertures, the method comprising:

 locating a locking ring in one of the bone screw apertures, the locking ring defining a locking ring opening and being resiliently expandable from a retracted state to an expanded state such that the locking ring opening has a first opening diameter in the retracted state and a second, larger opening diameter in the expanded state;

 inserting a bone screw into one of the bone screw apertures, the bone screw having a head with a head diameter greater than the first opening diameter and less than the second opening diameter; and

 removing the bone screw from the one bone screw aperture with a tool having a first portion engaging the head of the bone screw and a second portion resiliently expanding the locking ring to the expanded state.

138. (New) The method of claim 137, wherein the tool having the first portion threadably engages the head of the bone screw.

139. (New) The method of claim 137, wherein the first portion comprises a hex portion, and inserting the hex portion into a complementary hex indentation in the bone screw.

140. (New) The method of claim 137, wherein engaging the head of the bone screw with the first portion of the tool includes the step of threadably engaging an internally threaded aperture of the head.

141. (New) The method of claim 137, further comprising rotating the at least one bone screw with the first portion of the tool.

142. (New) The method of claim 137, further comprising drawing the second portion downward to resiliently expand the locking ring to the expanded state.

143. (New) A system for surgically repairing bone, the system comprising:
an elongated plate having a plurality of bone screw apertures;
a locking ring disposed in one of the bone screw apertures, the locking ring defining a locking ring opening and being resiliently expandable from a retracted state to an expanded state such that the locking ring opening has a first opening diameter in the retracted state and a second, larger opening diameter in the expanded state;
a bone screw inserted into the one of the bone screw apertures, the bone screw having a head with a diameter greater than the first opening diameter and less than the second opening diameter; and
a tool for removing the bone screw from the one bone screw aperture, the tool having a first portion for engaging the head of the bone screw and a second portion for resiliently expanding the locking ring to the expanded state.

144. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the first portion of the tool threadably engages an internally threaded aperture provided in the head of the bone screw.

145. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the first portion of the tool engages a hex opening in the head of the bone screw.

146. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the second portion of the tool includes a hollow cylindrical member surrounding the first portion.

147. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the second portion includes a tip having a wedge portion configured to expand the locking ring.

148. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the first portion is independently rotatable relative to the second drive portion.
149. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the locking ring comprises a plurality of paddles.
150. (New) The system for surgically repairing bone of claim 143, wherein the bone screw comprises a ledge.